

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE TEACHER EMPOWERMENT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS*

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Abstract: The objectives of this research were 1) to study the current and desirable state of the management to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools 2) to analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the management to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools and 3) to develop management strategies for enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary schools. The study was mixed method research. The samples were 395 elementary schools. The instruments used in this study were the questionnaire and the strategic evaluation form of feasibility and appropriateness. The data were analyzed by frequency, percentage, average, standard deviation, PNI_{Modified} and content analysis.

The results showed that 1) The current state of the management to enhance overall teacher empowerment in elementary schools were at the high level. The empowerment of individual was higher than the group empowerment ($\bar{x}=4.0641$ and 4.0249 respectively). The desirable state of the management to enhance overall teacher empowerment in elementary schools were at the highest level. The empowerment of individual was higher than the group empowerment ($\bar{x}=4.5159$ and 4.5019 respectively). 2) The strengths of the management to enhance the empowerment of teacher in elementary schools was the empowerment of individuals. The weaknesses of the management to enhance the empowerment of teacher in elementary schools was the empowerment of group. Opportunity for the management to enhance the empowerment of teachers in elementary schools was government policy and technology, the threat of the management to enhance the empowerment of teachers in elementary schools was the economic and society. 3) The management strategies to enhance the empowerment of teachers in elementary schools were (1) Enrich the strengths and opportunities, coupled with the reduction of weaknesses and

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prevention of threats to individual empowerment (2) Enrich the opportunities coupled with the reduction of weaknesses and prevention of threats to group empowerment.

Keywords: Management Strategies, Teachers' Empowerment, Elementary Schools

Introduction

Empowerment is a process of organizational administration and management that aim to enable employees to reach their full potentials and become a good fit for the organization. This is achieved through giving authority and opportunities for individual to demonstrate their capabilities, which would result in desirable changes within the organization. The changes would then enable the organization to accomplish desirable goals and outcomes. This issue is crucial for all organization since every organization needs their staffs to perform with full potential and capability (Athiporn Thonglor, 2003). Therefore, empowerment is important to building and enabling individual to become a useful and contributing member of society in all level: individual, team, and organizational.

Currently, the management of academic institution necessitates teacher empowerment management, since teachers play important roles in improving standard of education. Teachers facilitate students and manage the curriculum so that students are competent, ethical, and happy (Office of National Education Committee, 1999). In order for teachers to solidly and effectively perform their tasks, the teachers need to be empowered to improve their skills and capability with the focuses of living environment and as well as societal and political situation. Teachers also need to be able to effectively adapt to different and changing situations, therefore, administrators must adapt their management practices to place an emphasis on empowering teachers in term of academic administration through teacher empowerment strategies. Administrators also need to be conscious of curriculum development administration that would allow teachers to have more agendas in their work. However, from the studies of relevant literatures and researches, there is no known research in management strategies in term of teacher empowerment in elementary schools. Therefore, the said research would be valuable for improving students' capability, which is consistent with the national education reform policy as well as providing guidance in elementary school management according to the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

Objectives

There are three objectives:

1. To study the current and desirable state of the management to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools.
2. To analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the management to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools.
3. To develop management strategies for enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary schools.

The Conceptual Framework of the Study

According to the studies and relevant literature reviews on the management strategies for teacher empowerment in elementary schools, researchers synthesize the conceptual framework as follows:

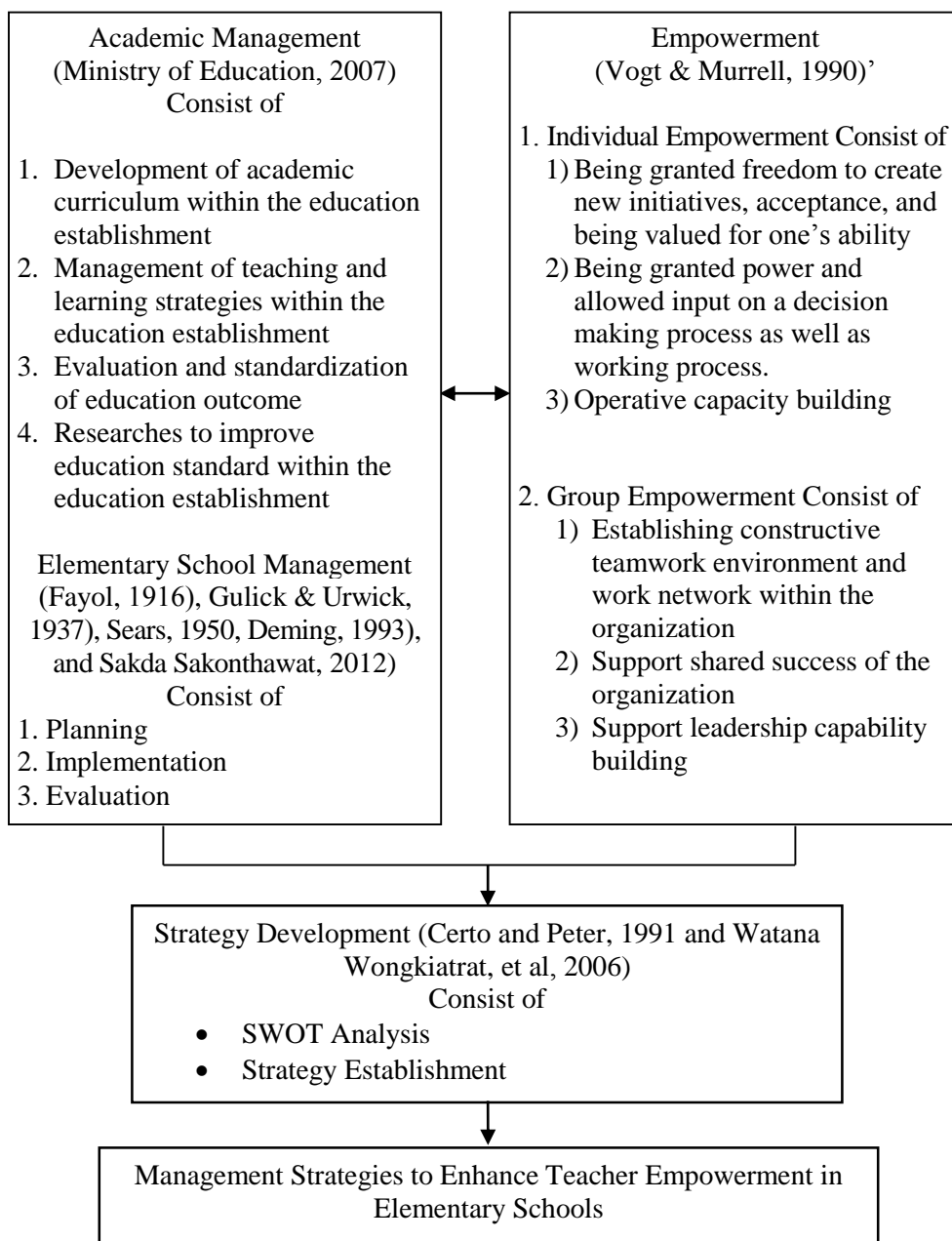


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Literature Review

In studying the management strategies to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools, the researchers studied and reviewed the following relevant documents:

1. Empowerment
2. The management strategies for empowerment in elementary schools.
3. Academic Administration
4. Development of management strategies
5. Relevant researches

Research Methodology

The overall process is organized as follows:

(See Figure 2 on the next page)

Findings

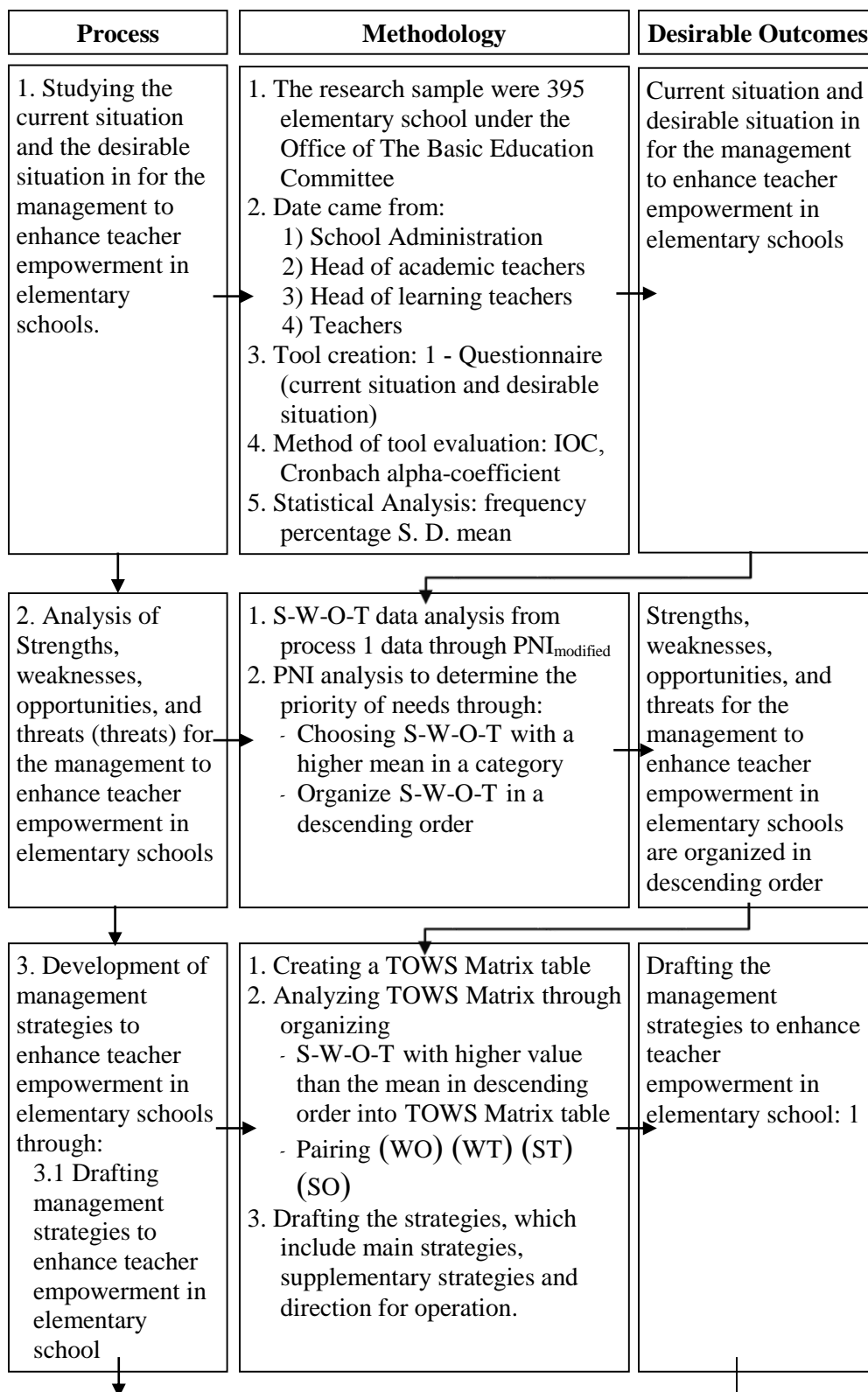
1. The current situation and the desirable situation for the management to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools.

1.1 From the internal factor analysis, it is found that the current situation for the administration to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools is high overall, when considered each aspect, the individual empowerment aspect has a higher mean than the group empowerment aspect ($\bar{x}=4.0641$ and 4.0249 respectively)

From the external factor analysis, it is found that the current situation for the administration to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools is high overall ($\bar{x}=3.7267$). When considered each aspect, the government policy aspect has the highest current mean ($\bar{x}=3.7724$), followed by the technological condition, which has a lower current mean ($\bar{x}=3.7635$), followed by societal condition, which has a current mean of $\bar{x}=3.7053$, and finally, the economic condition, which has the lowest current mean ($\bar{x}=3.6654$).

1.2 From the internal factor analysis, it is found that the desirable situation in for the administration to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools is considered highest, when consider each aspect, it is shown that individual empowerment has a higher mean than that of the group empowerment ($\bar{x}=4.5159$ and 4.5019 respectively).

From the external factor analysis, it is found that the desirable situation in for the administration to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools is considered high ($\bar{x}=4.4061$). When consider each aspect, it is shown that technological condition has the highest desirable mean ($\bar{x}=4.4289$), followed by the government policy aspect, which has a secondary desirable mean ($\bar{x}=4.4178$). The societal condition has the desirable mean of $\bar{x}=4.3949$ and the economic condition has the lowest desirable mean ($\bar{x}=4.3827$).



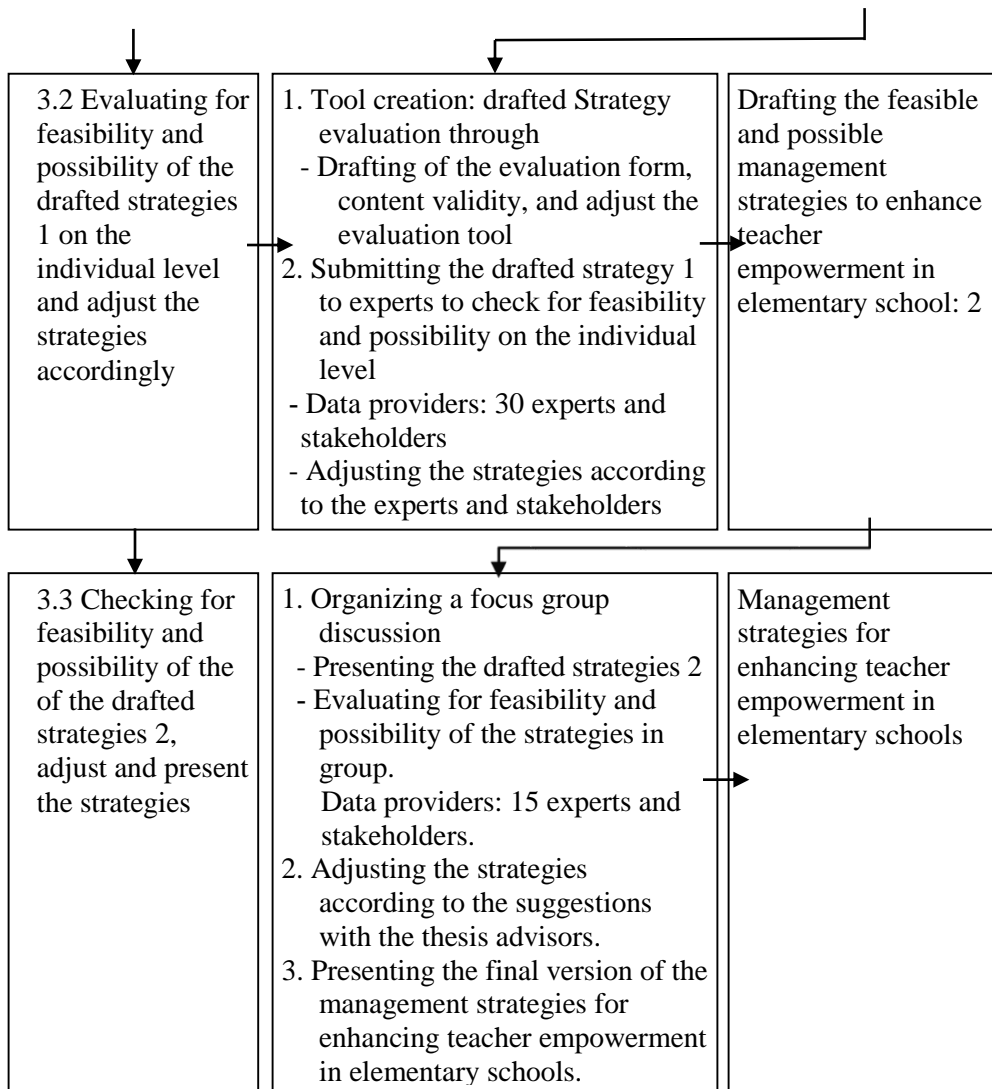


Figure 2: The Overall Process of the Study

2. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the administration to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools.

2.1 The administration's strengths in enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary school is individual empowerment (PNI modified= 0.1112)

2.2 The administration's weaknesses in enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary school is group empowerment (PNI modified= 0.1185)

2.3 The administration's opportunities in enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary school are technology conditions (PNI modified= 0.1768) and government policy (PNI modified = 0.1711)

2.4 The administration's threats in enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary school are economic conditions (PNI modified= 0.1957) and social conditions (PNI modified = 0.183).

3. Management Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Empowerment in Elementary Schools

The researchers developed 2 main management strategies and 6 supplementary management strategies as follows:

Management Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Empowerment

<p>Main strategy 1: Enriching the strengths and opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and preventing the threats of individual empowerment in academic administration.</p> <p>Supplementary strategy 1.1: Enriching the strengths and opportunities while preventing the threats of individual empowerment by allowing teachers to make decisions on academic management.</p> <p>Supplementary strategy 1.2: Enriching the strengths and opportunities while preventing the threats of individual empowerment by allowing teachers the freedom to take new initiatives as well as the recognition and appreciation in their academic work.</p> <p>Supplementary strategy 1.3: Enriching opportunities while preventing the threats of individual empowerment in capacity building for managerial works.</p>	<p>Main strategy 2: Enriching the opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and preventing the threats of group empowerment in academic administration.</p> <p>Supplementary strategy 2.1: Enriching the opportunities while preventing the threats of leadership capability building in cooperation works among teachers for academic task management.</p> <p>Supplementary strategy 2.2: Enriching the opportunities while preventing the threats of group empowerment by creating positive conditions in teamwork and building management networks for academic tasks.</p> <p>Supplementary strategy 2.3: Enriching the opportunities while preventing the threats of organizational success.</p>
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Results Discussion

1. The current situation and the desirable situation for the administration to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools.

1.1 The research findings show that currently, the administration's degree of teacher empowerment in elementary schools is at a high level, both in terms of individual empowerment and group empowerment. When considering the mean of each value, it is found that the individual empowerment currently has a higher empowerment mean than the group empowerment mean. This finding is consistent with Scott and Jaffe's idea that the early state of organization building requires individual empowerment because the employees need to develop the ability to make decisions, solve problems, think creatively, take responsibility, and the feeling of wanting to do

the best work “for the organization”, not just for an order or duty (1994). The idea is consistent with that of Mezirow (quoted in Kanith Keawichai, 2008) that puts an emphasis on making changes at the individual level in order to make changes in a societal level to achieve a just society. This notion is also consistent with Kinlaw’s idea that values individual empowerment through building the individual’s capacity for efficient working toward the productivity of an organization as well as developing love and affection for one’s organization. These combined with employing techniques in individual empowerment would lead to the individual to develop the self-esteem that help he/she feel valued and important, which would then contribute to building a strong individual who are able to comprehend life, economic, and society well. These all contribute to building individuals with good behavior and problem solving ability.

1.2 The research findings show that the degree of the desirable situation for the administration to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools is at the highest level, both in terms of individual empowerment and group empowerment. When considering the mean of each value, it is found that the individual empowerment currently has a higher empowerment mean than the group empowerment mean. The finding is consistent with Somkit Arjchula’s research findings in 2006. Arjchula did a study on the demand for empowerment in private school according to opinions of executives and teachers under Buriram school district 4. The study shows that the executives and teachers both want individual empowerment and even though each teacher has various work experiences, all want empowerment.

1.3 The research findings of the current external factors for empowering elementary teachers show that government policy has the highest current mean. This finding shows that even though there is no direct teacher empowerment policy, many of the government policy directions such as the O-NET performance raising policy and the satellite learning policy aiming to raise students’ performance in small elementary schools all over Thailand all contribute to empowering teachers in elementary school.

1.4 The research findings show that the desirable external factors for empowering teachers in elementary school show that technological condition has the highest desirable mean. This finding shows that the staff have the expectation that elementary schools should utilize technology in empowering teachers in regards to improving academic work more than it currently does.

2. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the administration to enhance teacher empowerment in elementary schools.

2.1 The research findings show that the administration’s strengths in enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary school is individual empowerment. This finding is consistent with the idea of Kinlaw (1995). Kinlaw explains that the initial conditions for success is individual’s involvement of the workforce, which means individuals are granted planning input and decision making input when it comes to the operation of the organization. This idea is consistent with that of Israel et al. (1994), which focuses on individual empowerment through building personnel’s decision making and life controlling capabilities. This empowerment functions as a

self-concept improvement or an individual's decision making capability. This notion is consistent with that of Gibson (1991), which states that the degree to which individuals are empowered at workplace depends on internal and external factors that affect said empowerment process. Furthermore, this is consistent with the research of Sumalee Khunjandee (1998) which studies the components of leaders of changes to empower teachers in elementary school and finds that in terms of body of knowledge regarding organizational empowerment, the related factor is organizational management. This means that the executives need to be the role models with vision, ethics, and willingness to take into consideration coworkers' opinions. These are consistent with the idea of Hokanson (1992), which states that to empower is to build, improve, and increase individual's efficiency to work towards achieving organizational tasks.

2.2 The research findings show that the administration's weakness in enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary school is group empowerment, which is inconsistent with the organizational management idea of Scott and Jaffe (1994). The idea states that in order to successfully manage an organization, the administrators must put an emphasis on empowerment on a group level, which is the interpersonal relationship among workers in group work. Groups that are empowered have the feeling of shared ownership and responsibility in the outcomes as well as a constant improvement and adjustment in terms of group work environment. As a result, there is a higher productivity from the group.

2.3 The research findings show that the administration's opportunities in enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary school are technological condition and government policy. This finding shows that technological progression and government policy regarding ICT equipment purchases for schools such as providing portable tablet computers for elementary school students in the previous school year and remote satellite learning. These are the factors that support academic tasks in elementary schools, which is consistent with the research of Kimberly Ann Fortune (2000 - cited by Saardlak Chongkhlaiklang, 2013). The research was on teachers and technology as well as case studies and empowerment with the objective of studying teachers' knowledge regarding technology as external factors by focusing on technology usage and teacher merits recognition. These elements are empowering the areas that affect the operation of the academic and teacher's knowledge which cannot be rapidly changed. The study shows that teacher's technology can introduce positive changes in operation and problem solving productivity.

2.4 The research findings show that the administration's threats in enhancing teacher empowerment in elementary school are economic and societal conditions. This finding is consistent with the research of Teera Runchareon (2000) that studies the condition and problems of basic education administering and managing in Thai educational establishment. The study finds that when problems and obstacles arise from decentralization within the educational establishment, the administrators often put the blame on the material issues such as insufficient funding, lack of teachers, and insufficient equipment. Furthermore, currently the community and parent-teacher organization have a limited role in education establishment through monetary contribution. The utilization of school board for the improvement of administration and management in academic work is still underutilized. These are the result of old

fashion organization culture and the fact that the school has not reached its full potential in terms of knowledge, capability and clarity in its authority. This issue is especially prevalent in remote schools, where many state that they prefer input and ideas from the parent-teacher organization rather than monetary support.

3. Administrative Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Empowerment in Elementary School

The research finding has developed 2 main strategies, the first one is enriching the strengths and opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and preventing the threats of individual empowerment in academic management, and the second one is enriching the opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and preventing the threats of group empowerment in academic management. These strategies are consistent with that of Kinlaw (1995) which suggests 3 core strategies for empowerment. These are: 1.) Supporting all levels of learning, namely individual level, interpersonal level, team level, and organizational level, 2.) Giving feedback to employees, and 3.) Building and developing teamwork, which is consistent with the ideas of Witherspoon (1997). Witherspoon states that there are different areas within the process of empowerment, namely individual, group, and organizational structure. These different areas require different emphasis. Firstly, the individual empowerment needs an emphasis on instituting a belief that one can produce useful work and positive changes, which would then motivate the individual to feel empowered to work, all organization needs to value employee empowerment. Secondly, group empowerment needs administration and management of individual, teams, and interpersonal relationship within different groups in the organization in order to achieve operation empowerment. Thirdly, organizational structure needs an emphasis on the arrangement of operation system, as well as providing rules and management on work environmental factor, which would then contribute to employee empowerment. This idea is also consistent with that of Vogt and Murell (1990), who value individual empowerment and believe that when individuals are empowered, they would improve their capability and achieve their full potential in the work place, as well as taking pride in their work and feel valued, which then lead to group empowerment and teamwork that produces quality output, which results in success of the organization.

Suggestions

1. Suggestions in utilizing the research findings

1.1 School's administration should put an emphasis on continuity of teacher empowerment policy and support the utilization of media and modern technology in teacher's academic administrative work.

Since the findings show that government policy and technological condition are administrative opportunities in terms of empowering teachers in elementary school, therefore, the administrators should utilize the opportunity to enhance the strengths in empowering teachers in a more obvious and concrete manner. These include following government policy in allowing teachers to give input in academic administration decision making processes as well as gathering resources and support

for teachers to use media and technology in academic administration. This can be done through cooperation with institution representative outside of the community, the private sector, and parents in terms of fundraising for media and technology purchases to support academic administration.

1.2 The main strategies that can be readily adapted by schools is the main strategy 1: Enriching strengths and opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and preventing threats in teacher empowerment in academic administration.

Since the research findings show that individual empowerment is the strength of teacher empowerment in elementary school, therefore, it shows that the school's administrators value individual empowerment and has to consistently work to empower individual teachers. Thus, school's administrators can readily adapt and use strategy 1 in practices. Enriching strengths and opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and preventing threats in teacher empowerment in academic administration will help schools achieve their goals more efficiently. This is consistent with the idea of Kinlaw (1995), which states that the main characteristic of empowerment strategies is that the empowerment method should be continuous and supportive of all levels of empowerment. These levels are individual, interpersonal, group, and organizational, as well as an integration of the policy on the organizational level.

1.3 The main strategies that school should utilize as a proactive practice is the main strategy 2: Enriching the opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and preventing the threats of group empowerment in academic administration.

Since the research findings show that group empowerment is the weakness of teacher empowerment in elementary schools, therefore, it necessitates proactive planning to reduce weaknesses and prevent threats which are obstacles to teacher empowerment. Elementary school administration should focus on group empowerment by supporting or giving leadership opportunities to teachers in group work as well as recognizing shared success in teachers' academic administration in a more concrete manner. This proactive planning through the utilization of main strategy 2 will lead to a more efficient academic administration improvement in schools.

1.4 School's administration should focus on building teacher's leadership quality in collaborative work.

Since the research findings show that building teacher's leadership quality has the highest degree of urgency, therefore, this finding demonstrates that both teachers and administrators agree that leadership building in collaborative works among elementary school teachers is not apparent. Therefore, school's administrators should value leadership building among teachers during collaborative work and allow teachers to demonstrate their leadership skills in academic task improvement. This will result in the school success in teacher's collaborative academic administration task, which is consistent with the findings of Day (1991-cited in Saardlak Chongkhlaiklang, 2013.) The findings state that the principles of which the administrators use to empower employee's potentials are trust in employee's capability, admiration of one another, creation of love for integrity and sacrifice, unanimity among one another, creation of valued works, leadership promotion, and freedom of work and self-control.

2. *Suggestions for further researches*

2.1 There should be further research on strategies for teacher empowerment in different educational contexts.

Since this research focuses on elementary schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission, which does not cover the Office of Private Education and schools with middle schools and high school education.

2.2 There should be research on the best strategies for teacher empowerment in different school sizes.

Since this research does not make a distinction on different sizes of elementary schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission, there should be further studies on different sizes of schools such as small, medium, large, and extra-large schools.

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